
Clark County Clean Water Funding Task Force

Final Report & Recommendations

September 15, 1999

I. Background

The Board of County Commissioners established the Clark County Clean Water Funding Task Force in May 1999. The Task Force was charged with recommending a funding plan and fee structure for the County's stormwater management program. The program is necessary to protect surface and ground water from stormwater runoff and must meet state requirements under the Federal Clean Water Act – National Pollution Discharge Elimination System.

The Task Force was selected to represent a cross section of the geographic, environmental and economic interests in the County. They accepted the following objectives:

- ◆ Develop reasonable funding structure alternatives
- ◆ Review alternatives with the affected public
- ◆ Recommend a preferred stormwater program funding structure for Clark County Board of Commissioners consideration

II. Recommendation Development Process

The Task Force met nine times from June 16th to September 8th. They also held two rounds of public meetings. Five occurred in July and another five in August. These public meetings were held at sites around unincorporated Clark County.

The Task Force established the following set of evaluation standards which they used in developing their recommendations.

- Acceptability- fair and equitable.
- Effectiveness- generates the needed revenue.
- Efficiency- easy to understand, administer, and collect.
- Completeness- addresses the entire stormwater management plan need.
- Accountability- tracks funds and program effectiveness.

The Task Force considered over 20 funding options during their deliberations. The most promising of these were reviewed in public meetings and refined into funding concepts that were again reviewed by the public.

The following recommendations are the results of this intensive process.

III. Recommendations

Clark County Board of Commissioners Adoption

The Task Force advises the Board to incorporate these recommendations into an adopting ordinance when establishing the stormwater management fund.

Funding System

The Task Force recommends a funding system that distributes charges by land use. Land uses are categorized into single-family residential lots, single-family residential large lots, multi-family residential lots, commercial and industrial lots, and undeveloped lots. A base unit is used to calculate charges for all land uses. The base unit is a single-family residence on less than a ½ acre lot.

The base unit fee is estimated to be \$ 33.00 per year. This is based on the following assumptions and calculations:

1. Calculations are based on a \$4 million per year cost to meet National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit/stormwater requirements plus overhead charges for billing and anticipated delinquency rates. In addition, a \$1 million per year fund reserve contribution will be collected.
2. Clark County will pay for its proportional share for its road surfaces.
3. The average impervious area for a single-family household (i.e., rooftop, driveway, walkways, patio, etc.) is estimated at 3,500 square feet. This is based on estimating impervious surface using aerial photography of urban subdivisions in unincorporated Clark County
4. The number of base units for commercial, industrial, multi-family, single-family, schools and churches in unincorporated Clark County is equal to an estimated total 144,900 base units.
5. When reductions for senior/low income citizens, multi-family, schools, and large lot owners are applied the estimated total base unit drops to an estimated total 122,600 base units.
6. An annual base unit cost of approximately \$33 per year is generated when dividing \$4 million by 122,600 base units.

Under this system charges for land use categories would be as follows:

Single Family Residential Lots:

All single family residences (including home occupation) on less than ½ acre lots would be charged a base unit fee regardless of the actual impervious surface contained on any individual lot.

Single Residence Large Lots:

Larger lots with single family residences or structures valued over \$10,000 would pay a reduced base unit fee. Rural landowners with agricultural or forestry operations on large lots are included in this category. Fees are proposed on the following sliding scale:

Lot size	Rate = % of base unit fee
<0.5 acres	100 %
0.5to 1 acres	90 %
>1 to 5 acres	80 %
>5 to 20 acres	70 %
>20 acres	60 %

This sliding scale reflects the fact that larger sized properties have greater potential to detain/retain more runoff on site. The reduced fee also recognizes that several erosion control, wetlands and stream protection programs already impact agricultural and forestry land.

Multi-family Residential Lots:

Multi-family units (e.g.- apartments, condos, townhouses, mobile home parks) would pay based on the number of units times the base unit fee.

Commercial and Industrial Lots:

Commercial and industrial properties would pay a multiple of the base unit fee based on actual impervious surface. Impervious surface area would be divided by the base unit square footage (3,500 square feet) to calculate the charge. This category includes non-residential use lots such as public facilities, hospitals/medical centers, golf courses, churches, and schools.

Undeveloped Lots:

Raw land or lots with structures valued at less than \$10,000 would not be charged a fee.

Senior Citizen/Low Income Reduction

Citizens that qualify under RCW 84.36.381 would receive a 50% reduction in their fee for single-family residential or single residence large lots.

Schools Partnership

Schools would qualify for fee reductions in exchange for entering into a contract to provide public education and other program services and use Best Management Practices on their properties.

Supporting Recommendations

The Task Force has also identified multiple issues and concerns that are not directly addressed in the recommended funding system itself. The Task Force developed a set of recommendations to support their funding system recommendation.

County Funding

The County will continue to fund the pre-1999 activities from revenues outside of the proposed funding system. The County will place all revenues collected from this proposed funding system into an Enterprise Fund dedicated to necessary incremental stormwater activities. The County Road Fund will pay its share to the Enterprise Fund using a base unit calculation.

Reserves in the Enterprise Fund

The Task Force recommends that the Board of County Commissioners take \$1 million dollars annually collected from all properties and place it in a reserve account. The fund account would be used for two purposes – capital improvements and an incentive program. It will be operated as follows:

- ◆ Use reserve to provide incentives after year one and/or use reserve to fund capital projects
- ◆ Any excess revenue collected in any year goes to the reserve
- ◆ Revenues from fines and penalties will be placed in this fund
- ◆ Any interest earnings from revenues in this fund will reside in this fund

Accountability

The Task Force feels it is important to guarantee that funds collected for the stormwater management program are used just for the purpose of stormwater management. To ensure accountability, the Task Force recommends that a citizen clean water commission be established to provide oversight to the program and the enterprise fund.

The commission is proposed to be made up of 9 members with three year staggered terms of service. The Board of County Commissioners will appoint this citizen commission that represents a cross section of Clark County residents and would act much like a utility commission. The commission is proposed to have primary responsibility for:

- Reviewing and approving planned activities
- Prioritizing capital projects
- Overseeing the stormwater enterprise fund
- Ensuring compliance with the NPDES program
- Ensuring that money is spent where it is supposed to go
- Encouraging Clark County inter-departmental actions on stormwater
- Developing the incentive program
- Making regular progress reports to the public and the Board of County Commissioners

Incentives

The Task Force recommends that the citizen clean water commission design and oversee an incentive program that rewards landowners using best management practices when property is developed to current standards and private facilities are privately maintained. The program should also provide inducements to retrofit older developed land.

The Task Force recommends that the commission explores and investigates the following as part of an incentive program:

- Incentive program would start on the 2nd year
- Reducing charges by a significant percentage for use of best management practices when property is developed to current standards and private facilities are privately maintained
- Offer incentives for managing both quality and quantity of runoff
- Provide inducements for older businesses to retrofit
- Use a sliding scale of fee reductions for types/levels of stormwater management

Enforcement and Fines

The Task Force recommends that the Board review code enforcement effectiveness. This review should result in more stringent and consistent enforcement and strengthening of existing codes. The Task Force recommends that enforcement be strengthened by:

- Increasing fines to a significant level
- Closedown development activities until compliance is established
- Require developers to inspect their sites daily
- Provide quicker response to citizen complaints
- Delay final inspections and approvals until any appeals are settled
- Consider restrictions to, and closely monitor, wet season excavation

Billing

The Task Force recommends that billing be based on the County's LID program (e.g., similar to the billing system used in to bill citizens in Burnt Bridge Creek area). An additional 7.5% of the total revenue needed should be added to account for delinquency rates.

Program Coordination

The Task Force recommends that the existing County managed stormwater program in Burnt Bridge Creek be incorporated into the new countywide stormwater program and funding system. Any Burnt Bridge Creek reserve funds remaining after December 1999 should be set aside for capital improvements in Burnt Bridge Creek and be used specifically for projects in this watershed.

The Task Force also recommends that the County take the lead in inviting other jurisdictions to collaborate in developing a countywide stormwater program. The Task Force sees a countywide program as the most efficient, and would hope that this option is looked at seriously by the County and other jurisdictions within the county.

Public Information and Education

The Task Force also recommends that stewardships and partnerships with community groups be explored. Universities, service organizations, and interest groups should be recruited to enter into partnerships with the County to perform stormwater management activities such as monitoring, maintenance, or public education required by the permit.